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Office for Information  
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# ALA American Library Association

April 16, 1997

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Federal Communications Commission  
Office of Secretary

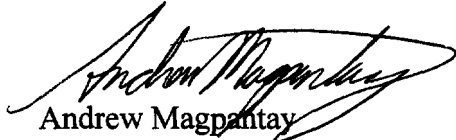
Mr. William F. Caton  
Acting Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street, NW Room 222  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Ex Parte Presentation  
CC Docket No: 96-45, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service

Dear Mr. Caton:

A copy of the attached editorial from the Nashville, *Tennessean* and press release from the Education and Library Networks Coalition (EdLiNC) was left with James Rubin of the General Counsel's Office of the Federal Communications Commission.

Sincerely,



Andrew Magpantay  
Director  
Office for Information Technology Policy  
American Library Association

Enclosure

CC:

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12A • Saturday, April 12/ 1997 — THE TENNESSEAN

# EDITORIALS

THE TENNESSEAN  
*A Gannett Newspaper*

## Plugging in at the library

CONGRESS did the right thing last year when it added a provision to the telecommunications bill calling for significant discounts on a variety of telecommunication services to libraries and schools.

Federal regulators now must keep the teeth in that provision.

One of the cornerstones of the massive 1996 Telecommunications Act is a provision calling for universal service. Congress wanted to assure as it was reviewing and restructuring a whole range of telecommunication services that families and individuals with limited resources would not be denied access to those services.

One of the crucial elements of universal service, as it appears in the new law, is a provision giving libraries and schools discounted telecommunications rates.

The Federal Communications Commission is now in the process of writing rules that will put the law's provisions to work. Among the many details to be worked out are exactly how the discounts should be calculated and the terms and conditions of those discounts.

The FCC is also considering deeper discounts for libraries and schools in high-cost areas, such as rural communities, as well as in low-income areas.

The notion behind these discounts is obvious. Libraries and schools, which are supported by taxpayers, get similar discounts on other materials. Despite this nation's increasing dependence on telecommunications services, including the

### Law calls for discounts for libraries, schools

Internet, many families, individuals, students and small businesses cannot afford to be plugged in at home or at work. That current lack of universal service is exactly why it is vital that every public library and school takes full advantage of telecommunications.

When libraries and schools are plugged in, everyone will have access.

Despite the provision's merit, some representatives of the telecommunications industry are now balking about the size of the discount. If the FCC follows one internal recommendation, the aggregate discount to libraries and schools would be about \$2.25 billion annually.

On its face, that seems like a huge discount to exact from one industry. But the telecommunications industry itself is huge and extremely profitable. It can afford the discounts.

Moreover, that money will act as an investment in telecommunications in the future. Many of the students and library patrons who become acquainted with on-line information services will eventually go on line in their own homes and offices.

This discount isn't a give-away. It's an investment. And it's also a commitment to democracy that the federal government needs to keep. ■



## Education & Library Networks Coalition

Alliance for Community Media  
American Association for Adult and  
Continuing Education  
American Association of School  
Administrators  
American Library Association  
American Psychological Association  
Association for Education  
Communications and Technology  
Association for Supervision and  
Curriculum Development  
Association for the Advancement of  
Computing in Education  
Center for Media Education  
Consortium for School Networking  
Council for American Private  
Education  
Council for Educational  
Development and Research  
Council of Chief State School Officers  
Education Legislative Services, Inc.  
Educational Testing Service  
Federation of Behavioral  
Psychological and Cognitive  
Services  
International Society for Technology  
in Education  
International Telecomputing  
Consortium  
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Elementary  
School Principals  
National Association of Independent  
Schools  
National Association of Secondary  
School Principals  
National Association of State Boards  
of Education  
National Association of Student Financial  
Aid Administrators  
National Catholic Educational Association  
National Education Association  
National Grange  
National Rural Education Association  
National Rural Electric Cooperative  
Association  
National School Boards Association  
Organizations Concerned about  
Rural Education  
People for the American Way  
Action Fund  
The Global Village Schools Institute  
United States Catholic Conference  
United States Distance  
Learning Association

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 16, 1997

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### **EDLiNC REAFFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF TIMELY DISCOUNTS FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNERS**

Reaffirming their commitment to the Joint Board Recommendations, EdLiNC, a coalition of 36 school and library organizations, today stressed the importance of providing discounts on telecommunication services for schools and libraries. These discounts must be in time for the beginning of the 1997-98 school year in September.

By statute the Federal Communications Commission must act on universal service by May 8. These rules will determine the size and scope of discounts on telecommunications services for libraries and schools as called for by the Snowe-Rockefeller-Exon-Kerrey amendment to the Telecommunications Act. The Joint Board Recommendations made last November were the result of tireless efforts by federal and state regulators, consumer groups and telecommunications providers across the country.

Currently only 14 percent of school classrooms are connected to the Internet, while only 28 percent of libraries are able to offer Internet access to the public. However, by the year 2000, computer literacy skills are going to be necessary for more than 60 percent of the new jobs -- skills currently held by only 20 percent of the population.

FCC implementation of the Snowe-Rockefeller amendment will help to close this gap, guaranteeing that our children will have the skills they need to thrive in the 21st century. There is also strong bipartisan support for the provision of telecommunications discounts for schools and libraries. The FCC is committed to a plan which will fully fund schools and libraries without raising residential rates.

We are now only days away from a final ruling from the FCC. We cannot allow Snowe-Rockefeller to be delayed by industry infighting over other parts of telecommunications regulation. Legislators, regulators, consumers groups and telecommunications providers should unite with EdLiNC and do what's right to maintain universal service for America's children, lifelong learners and all consumers.

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